

Innovations

Impact of Employee Engagement and its Emerging Elements during Covid-19 in the IT Industry

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Abstract

Employee Engagement is a highly discussed, researched, and investigated term amongst researchers and behavioral scientists world wide and has come up with varied dimensions and factors in different industries. Keeping this in mind, the current study is being conducted to identify emerging factors and collect relevant information concerning the IT industry. An extensive literature review is done to extract important parameters influencing EE in the IT industry during the COVID-19 period. 'Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA)' is applied to check the statistical validity of the identified factors and their level of impact. The study found four key factors family engagement(4.67), acknowledgment & recognition(4.61), strong communication(4.59), and incentives & perks(4.44).

Keywords: 1.Employee Engagement, 2.covid19, 3.employee performance, 4.IT industry.

Introduction

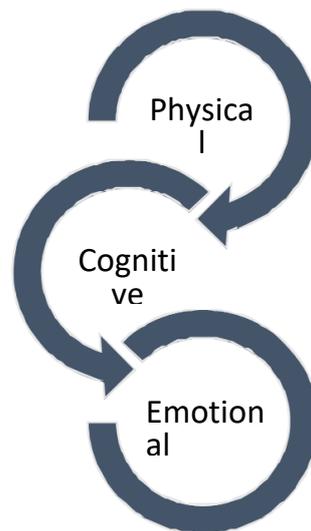
Employee engagement relates to a higher level of job commitment, dedication, and work involvement at the workplace. It refers to the feeling of self-motivation for the task given to the employees (Manjunath & Chandni, 2018). Keeping a higher level of employee engagement during covid19 was the biggest challenge for IT firms. People were under threat, and there was a scenario of uncertainty. On the other hand, cases displayed in newspapers and channels distracted the employees from their work. It was a time of social unrest, which showed a lasting effect on job performance, commitment, and engagement (Purushothaman & Kaviya, 2021). IT business was not as affected as others were because employees started working from home. However, there was a significant impact observed on their performance and engagement. IT industry was agile during the covid19 period hence it becomes crucial to know why IT firms' performances did not influence and how they managed employee engagement during covid19 period (Deloitte, 2020). COVID-19 brought unprecedented challenges to the IT world, and businesses set new working guidelines. Employee engagement became their most significant challenge (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020).

Dimensions of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a broad field for research and findings, and it deals with employees' unique skills and characteristics that help to deliver higher performance and work-related consistency (Anand, 2020). It is a great source of motivation and employee enthusiasm which every organization

looks for. Highly engaged employees gave their fullest even during the pandemic period and proved the significance of employee engagement to the organization (Terry, 2020). Therefore, various dimensions have been introduced to understand its scope and importance. Kahn's talked about the three crucial dimensions of employee engagement: *physical engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement*. Physical engagement refers to physical and mental involvement in the job that influences higher and consistent performance. Cognitive engagement talks about employees' strategies that he implements to attend to their responsibilities and vision better to contribute to organizational success. The third is Emotional Engagement, which explains the employees' emotional relationship with the organization. Employees feel the feeling of association and belongingness about the organization (Tiwari & Lenka, 2019).

Fig1-DimensionsofEmployeeEngagement



Source: Academy of Management Journal

Employee Engagement Practices During Covid-19

Employee engagement was challenging for all the firms during the Covid-19 pandemic, but some industries and sectors succeeded in maintaining employee engagement. IT industry was among them, and it could be possible only through best employee practices and policies (Vickers, 2019). When work-from-home practices were started during the Covid19 pandemic, HR experts started brainstorming to find the best solution to this unexpected situation. Across the world, HR experts and heads formulated various policies and techniques that can help them to ensure consistent performance and output. According to Sarkar (2020), family engagement was one of the prominent practices that IT firms adopted in which family engagement was initiated, especially for female employees. This practice included entertainment, involvement, and engagement of kids online so that their mother/father could work smoothly. Shrotryia and Dhanda (2020) explained that IT firms during the Covid-19 pandemic started reimbursement schemes for their employees for various types of expenses during working hours was repaid to the employees. Which primarily included internet bills, phone recharge, refreshments, OTT subscriptions, medical bills, etc. Some companies adopted learning and skill development programs for their employees to maintain their engagement. In this scheme, employees were offered free online learning programs, including their family members. It has proven to be the prominent strategy that significantly improved their work engagement during the Covid-19 period (Goyal, Trivedi, Nandwani, Changulani & Lokhandwala, 2020). Other strategies that worked out were work flexibility, strong communication with remote team members, and online community formation. Such strategies improved employees' morale and enthusiasm (Talukar, 2020). Timely salary,

incentives, increments, and no salary cuts, even with less or no work, was the most effective HR practice that maintained and increased employee engagement, dedication, and loyalty towards the organization (Singh, 2020b).

Literature Review

Employee engagement is subjective and depends upon various factors, including current workplace and society scenarios. Covid19 is a recent incident that created an adverse environment for each of us. Hence, one must learn how to be engaged during turbulent times in and at the workplace. Managing focus during a tough time is an art, and firms must know its secret (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). Generating employee engagement during the Covid19 period was very difficult for the firms. Various IT firms designed and developed effective techniques to increase employee engagement and maintain even during work from the home condition. Employee-centric activities have increased during the covid19 period, making employees feel important and crucial to the organization (Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2018). Covid19 pandemic showed a distinct relationship between employers and employees in the IT industry. Employees were given special treatment and encouraged to consistent performance. Most IT firms developed an integrated model to improve organizational commitment and positive perception towards the work and the firm (Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2019a).

Employee engagement practices offer work-related freedom, smooth work-life balance, employee happiness, and employee loyalty. It enhances employees' productivity by keeping them engaged and motivated. IT firms organized various effective programs during the covid19 period to improve employee engagement and ensure predictable output even during turbulent times (Goswami, 2020). IT industry managed the turbulent time of covid19 in every sense, viz. employee happiness and satisfaction, employee performance, employee engagement, employee loyalty, etc. Research has been conducted to know what practices, schemes, and techniques these IT firms used to make their dreams come true during the Covid-19 period. The findings suggest various dimensions like- prompt communication, strong employee relationship, showing the firm's concern for their family, offering work-related flexibility, planning entertainment and training programs, etc. (Sarkar, 2020). The global pandemic has transformed the world and touched everyone in different ways. IT world faced a challenging time with other industries but overcame soon through scientific techniques that tremendously worked for employee engagement. Thus, it acknowledges the emergence of innovative techniques to ensure higher work engagement in the organization. The firms must focus on creative management practices and engagement programs, showing concern for their employees during the pandemic (Dutta, 2020).

Research Method

The study follows the principles of descriptive research technique to analyze 'what' are the important parameters of 'employee engagement' during covid19 pandemic in the IT industry. The research shall present the emerging parameters of employee engagement with the help of Confirmatory Factor Analysis. CFA is conducted using AMOS 26 using primary responses collected from 158 IT managers with the help of a structured questionnaire. The Alpha Coefficient value was observed at .891, which shows that the questionnaire is statistically eligible to record responses and prove its validity. Questionnaire validity is important in descriptive research, especially when the data is collected directly from the field through a self-structured questionnaire.

Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis is conducted using the maximum likelihood method with the help of AMOS 26. The study identified four crucial factors during the Covid-19 pandemic employee engagement.

Fig2-IdentifiedFactors

Family Engagement (M=4.67)	Acknowledgment and Recognition (M=4.61)
Strong Communication (M=4.59)	Incentives&Perks (M=4.44)

1st Factor: Family Engagement (4.67):Family engagement was the most potent factor that boosted employee engagement during the covid19 pandemic in the IT industry. Family engagement refers to entertainment, learning, games, and education of the employee’s family members when an employee is working from home. This factor played a strategic role in keeping employees engaged, predominantly female employees. During the pandemic, IT firms were very prompt in finding new ways of employee engagement and succeeded in their plan. IT firms organized various online entertainment programs for kids and elders and events for employees to feel comfortable working. On the other hand, diverse training, development, and skill enhancement programs were organized. Family engagement was asignificant factor that helped maintain positive work engagement during the covid19 period (Harris,2020).

2nd Factor: Acknowledgment and Recognition (4.61): Work-related acknowledgment and recognition was the second crucial factor during the covid19 pandemic that helped IT firms keep employees enthusiastic and engaged. The work-related engagement was a challenge during the pandemic, and many sectors have lost their performance. Acknowledging work performance and good work is always a good strategy. The IT industry achieved its objectives through systematic plans, including employee-centric policies and activities.

3rd Factor: Strong Communication (4.59): Communication was a strong tool that kept IT employees always on and charged for expected performance. IT firms during the entire pandemicperiodestablishedstrongcommunicationwithemployees.Itwasprofessional and informal communication about health, family, problem, requirements, etc. During the pandemic, the IT firm took care of all the requirements and needs of the employees through strong and regular communication.

4th Factor: Incentives and Perks (4.44): Incentives and perks were integral to IT firms’ strategies for improving employee engagement during the covid19 period. IT firms saved huge costs during this period and shared the benefits with employees through incentives and extra perks. It significantly increased employees’ enthusiasm and dedication. It was a robust strategy that worked seriously well during the covid19 time. Different types of incentives like- overtime, bonus, reimbursement,and many more.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic was a tough time for everyone, especially the firms that stopped their operations and were overburdened by debts. Many have lost their financial strength, were shut down, and suffered deep losses. However, IT firms were not affected much as they used workable strategies and adopted the situation soon. Working from home was a competent tool for them, but IT firms also developed strategic plans for employee engagement, Involvement, and performance. Close connection and communication during the pandemic have proven to be the best strategy for employee engagement. Firms that manage and maintain strong communication successfully achieve their business goals. Hence, the study concludes that *family engagement, acknowledgment and recognition, strong communication & incentives, and perks* were the key parameters of employee engagement during theCovid-19period.

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